



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Edward's RCP School
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Headteacher: Mr Gerard Keane
Chair of Governors: Mrs Margaret Leatham

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: March 2011
Date of previous inspection: June 2008
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Dolan

Information about the school

St Edward's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic Primary School serving the parish of Sacred Heart and St Edward's in Darwen. The school serves two large estates of public housing, several new building developments and well established private housing. The admission number is 30 and there are 217 children in single age classes between the ages of 4-11. The school is regularly oversubscribed. The school does not have nursery provision and the children enter reception from a broad range of socio-economic circumstances. Attainment on entry is generally below national average. 212 children are baptised Catholics (98%) 5% of children are other than white British and 4% have English as an additional language. 6% of the children are entitled to free school meals which is well below the national average. 17% of the children are on the special needs register and 5 children have a statement of special educational need.

There are 8 full time teachers working at St Edwards and 7 (88%) are Catholic. 5 teacher have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies and 2 teachers are undertaking the course at the present time.

Overall Effectiveness

Grade 2

St Edward's is a good and improving school with outstanding features. The headteacher has a strong vision of how he wishes to develop Religious Education in the school and he is supported by the Religious Education coordinator and all the staff. The governors are very committed and support the school to promote this vision. Partnership between the school and parish is developing and there are good relationships with parents. The school promotes inclusivity and a strength of the school is the integration of pupils with special needs and the care and support they are given. Behaviour around the school and in the classrooms is very good and the children are very polite and welcoming.

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

Capacity for sustained improvement at St Edward's is outstanding. The new headteacher works with the Religious Coordinator to develop all aspects of the religious life of the school.

The school has worked hard to develop links between the school and parish and this is having a very positive effect. At the beginning of the school year the Religious Education coordinator produces a draft plan of all Masses and liturgies and discusses these with the parish priest so that dates can be arranged and any amendments made. The school has supported the parish by re-introducing the sacramental programme into the school alongside curriculum Religious Education. The parish priest and parishioners along with parents and other family members are invited to attend school events including Holy Week liturgies and Carol Concerts. There is a good response

and those who attend are very supportive and feel welcome in school. The family liaison teacher liaises with the parish priest regarding community events and the school organises a stall for the parish Christmas Fair.

A new extension was completed in 2010 with the refurbishment of the Victorian building and the building of a new classroom. Classrooms have been enlarged and areas around the school are now available for extra pupil support and to organise resources centrally so that teachers know what is available. Religious Education resources are catalogued and well presented and the Religious Education coordinator ensures that they are updated regularly.

The school has been proactive in reviewing the new syllabus recommended by the diocese and hopes to begin the scheme in the new academic year. The headteacher and coordinator have attended all the training arranged by the diocese prior to the introduction of the scheme to provide a smooth transition in September. The enthusiasm and motivation of staff, governors and children ensure that the school will be well placed to build upon good practice and sustain further improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- 1. Continue to develop links between the school and the parish community**

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

Grade 2

Outcomes are good with some outstanding features. Attainment on entry is below national average but results indicate that the children make very good progress by the end of Key Stage 2 and are well prepared for their continued studies in high school. The school is committed to inclusion and children with special educational needs are well supported by a very committed team of teaching assistants and the children feel safe and secure in their environment. There is a significant number of children requiring extra help and it is a strength of the school how well these children are integrated and supported. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is very good and children are aware that any problems can be discussed with a member of staff. Children enjoy coming to school and attendance is excellent.

Children have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through a very pro-active school council. They meet fortnightly and ideas are passed on to the headteacher for approval. They organised a fund raising event for Cancer Research and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and raised £251. Older pupils have prefect responsibilities around the school and are play leaders. A member of the senior leadership team is designated Family Liaison Teacher and she works on the every child matters agenda encouraging parental

involvement, mentoring vulnerable pupils and providing a time-out club at lunchtime.

The Catholic ethos is promoted by interesting displays and religious artefacts around the school and by the prayer focus in each classroom. The mission statement is visible throughout the school and is a screen saver on laptops and whiteboards. The sacramental programme is organised through the school and children are encouraged to attend Mass. There is an annual plan for liturgical celebrations which includes whole school, key stage and class based Masses. An assembly plan is in place and children are keen to participate in class assemblies. Parents, governors and parishioners are welcome to join the children for Masses, liturgies and assemblies and they are encouraged to record comments in a parents' book. During inspection, in the headteacher's Lenten assembly, the children were reminded to pray, give up something they normally enjoy and do something extra for others during Lent. The children were also encouraged to return their boxes for Caritas to help less fortunate people in the diocese. The children have also raised money for other charities including the Haiti Earthquake disaster, the Rotary clubs crocus bulbs for polio project and through the school council for cancer research and WWF.

There is a prayer group that meets weekly in October, Advent, Lent and May. Children from Key Stage 2 choose to attend at lunchtime and the number of children has increased from a small group of 5 to at least 15 and often more. There is also an opportunity to attend the sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Year 5 children celebrated St Patrick's day with Mass in the classroom. The children were very reverent and attentive, the readings were well presented and the singing, including soloists during Holy Communion, was excellent. In Year 3 the children were involved in a thought provoking service about forgiveness. After a reading of the story of the Prodigal Son the children considered what they wanted to say sorry for and placed stones in a bowl of water to symbolise cleansing. Quiet music, candles and a central prayer focus helped develop the prayerful atmosphere. Retreats are arranged and Year 6 take part in a Crossroads event with pupils from St Bede's school led and arranged by the Religious Education link governor.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 2

Provision for Catholic Education at St Edward's is good. Monitoring takes place yearly in the spring term including planning, book scrutinies and assessment. Observations are planned in the near future. Work in books is generally good with some outstanding. Differentiation is not always clear in books but was seen during inspection. Conferences take place with groups of children when they have the opportunity of talking about the work they have been doing during the term. A report is given to the headteacher and is then presented to the Governors curriculum committee. Tracking sheets are completed for each class to record children's levels in Religious Education and these are monitored by the Religious Education coordinator three times a

year after assessments are completed. New short term planning sheets have been introduced since the last inspection and all this information feeds into the Religious Education action plan.

The children in Key Stage 2 are taught about other world religions in the Summer term. This is very well planned and popular with staff and pupils. The children have their own World Religion books which they take with them through the school and are given to them when they leave primary education. This year the theme is to be linked to art week when visiting artists from Blackburn college are working in the school to help the children to produce artwork from other cultures. Staff are very enthusiastic and photographs of hall displays from previous years showed that they were very informative with many examples of children's work. Visitors are invited into school to broaden the children's knowledge of other cultures and children have the opportunity to visit other places of worship.

During inspection there were some very good examples of teaching and learning in Religious Education. Year 4 were thinking of how Jesus' friends would have felt leading up to His crucifixion. The lesson was well organised and the children showed good prior knowledge of the life of Jesus in the way they answered questions and interacted with the teacher. Tasks were well differentiated and included appropriate words for the prayer display and poems on 'friendship plates.' Year 6 looked at St Peter's denial of Jesus after his arrest. This was a good opportunity for the children to find relevant passages in their bibles. They discussed the fact that reconciliation means that you have to begin with admitting that you have done wrong and they developed their thoughts through role play and writing diary extracts. Zacchaeus was the topic during an exceptional lesson in Year 1. The lesson had good pace and there were high expectations of interaction and behaviour. The children were enthralled by the story told with actions by the teacher and teaching assistant. The excellent lesson in reception class began with a short role play by a group of children from year 6 about Jesus inviting the apostles to be 'fishers of men.' There was a very good relationship with the teacher and teaching assistants and the children were very attentive and keen to join in with the discussion. The children divided into groups for well thought out and interesting activities including free writing, role play and 'fishing for men.'

Religious Education resources are stored centrally and are well organised and catalogued. This year capitation has been spent on new bibles and biblical costumes for role play in Key Stage 2. The very high standard of singing in the school is enhanced by a good choice of accompaniment CD's and there are DVD's available to enhance learning in Religious Education lessons. The teachers plan using RE vision 2000 but are preparing to begin The Way, The Truth and The Life in September. In accordance with national and diocesan guidelines 10% of curriculum time is spent on Religious Education and although parents are aware of their rights of withdrawal, the school has not been requested to withdraw any children from Religious Education or Prayer and Worship.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Grade 2

St Edward's is a Catholic community who try to live and work by Gospel values. It is ably led by a very committed headteacher supported by his senior management team and staff and a very able governing body. The governors are aware of developments in Religious Education in the school through the headteacher's report, school evaluation reports and the school development plan. Governors are regular and welcome visitors into school. There are formal and informal meetings between the headteacher and the Chair of Governors and the Religious Education coordinator meets regularly with the link governor. The coordinators file includes policies, tracking documents and attainment levels in Religious Education. Assemblies are planned in advance and records are kept of previous assemblies, liturgies and Masses. There is also a very interesting and complementary book of comments from parents and friends who have attended events in school.

The staff are good role models and have high personal and professional standards. Effective team work ensures that children are encouraged and supported both in their school work and in other aspects of their lives. Communications with parents is through a fortnightly newsletter but parents are aware that they can arrange to see staff if they have any problems concerning their children. Parents consider the quality of the welcome, the atmosphere and levels of communication strengths of the school. Reports are sent home twice yearly and parents are given the opportunity to meet with their children's teachers to discuss their targets and progress. There is a school website and a brochure that is updated annually.

Professional development for staff is encouraged and staff are regularly involved in diocesan initiatives. One staff training day each year is reserved for developing the religious life of the school. This has included joining with other Catholic schools for a thought provoking day entitled, 'Catholic schools – mission into practice' led by a team from Liverpool Hope University, reflection and liturgy and a session on meditation in 2009 and a day entitled, 'A growing community in Christ'. Management targets are set in the autumn term and the Religious Education coordinator always has Religious Education as one of her objectives. The school is to look at the possibility of religious objectives for all staff next year.

The school joins with St Joseph's Primary School in Darwen for a joint carol service during Advent and they join with other schools for the Blackburn Cathedral Carol Service. St Edward's regularly organise events to raise money for famine relief and disasters in other countries but they are considering a partnership with a school in a third world country to broaden horizons of their pupils and to enhance the already very strong level of commitment the children have for others who are less fortunate.